

WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT

Leadership Program

Cindy Bobbitt was driving a tractor along a rutted road in rural Oklahoma one day in 2004 when part of her seeding equipment broke. She had long been frustrated by the poor condition of local roads and bridges, and this was the final straw. She decided to run for a seat on the Grant County Board of County Commissioners. She faced long odds: At the time, only three of the state's more than 200 county commissioners were women.

But Bobbitt won and has since made upgrading Oklahoma's long-neglected infrastructure her top priority. One of her ideas resulted in the creation of an Emergency Transportation and Revolving Fund, which provides interest-free loans for building county roads and bridges. The fund has helped fast-track bridge construction projects across the state.

As a farmer who understands the crucial role of infrastructure, she has worked with landowners and utility companies in her county to complete projects at lower costs. Bobbitt has also advocated for the issue nationally, serving on committees and testifying before the U.S. Senate. "It's a partnership," she says. "We need to work together at all levels -- local, state and federal."

Read about the Women in Government program and the rest of the honorees as printed in Governing – April 2018.

<http://www.governing.com/gov-institute/wig/>

The Women in Government Leadership Program was created in 2014 as an ongoing, program of the Governing Institute. Each summer, 25 women serving in state and local offices will be selected to participate in the bipartisan national program.

Statistics from academic institutions including the Center for American Women in Politics (CAWP) at Rutgers University clearly show the number of women in elected office in local and state offices has largely remained stagnant since the early 1990s. The Governing Institute is making a deliberate and strategic effort to invest in programs and resources that support elected

women in government. The Women in Government Leadership Program is one such program and has three primary goals.

First, to acknowledge and celebrate the work of women public servants by highlighting them in *Governing*.

Second, to provide leadership training and job critical skills during three in-person retreats where the cohort establishes relationships and a network with their class and program alumnae.

Third, the participants will be asked to pay it forward by mentoring the next generation of women running for office. We look forward to seeing the power and impact of these influential women now and in the future.

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- Photographs by David Kidd